

“SUBIR, SUBIR SIEMPRE”: REPRESENTING DEATH AS PRESENTIMENT IN *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*

Megan L. Kelly

After Manuel Moreno-Isla dies in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Aurora recounts how she learned of his death. On the street, she had met his British servant Tom and, as she later tells Fortunata: “El inglés entonces, con un terror que no puedo pintarte nos dijo: ‘Señor muerto; señor como muerto’” (1002). While the reader has been directly informed of precisely how Moreno-Isla was stricken, the diegetic telling of his death is fraught with imprecision. The death is announced in poor Spanish, and above all it is unclear whether or not Moreno-Isla merely *appears* to be dead. The unspeakability of his death is also reflected by Aurora’s inability to properly convey the details that surround it. Not only do words fail her in describing Tom, but she felt “un miedo que no te puedo ponderar” as she approached Moreno-Isla’s bedroom and sees an image that she does not wish to recall: “No puedo pintarte el horror que me causó lo que vi,” she tells Fortunata (1003). As this brief scene demonstrates, death disturbs the meaning-making associated with language. Like Aurora before the tongue-tied servant, the reader must assemble the broken signs to interpret the death scene that the writer struggles to portray.

Dying has a silencing function in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Harriet Turner envisions Moreno-Isla’s death as a suffocation of speech, as his incessant monologues regrettably accelerate the approach of death (“Strategies” 72). Stephen Gilman notes that the truncated speech that marks the novel’s death scenes is an essential building block of Galdós’s Realism. By highlighting “those areas or situations where speaking as such begins, ceases, or becomes inaudible,” Galdós draws our attention to the liminality of narration, and thusly, the meta-fictional nature of the novel (276). Certainly, the moment of death represents the boundary of existence, the liminal space between being alive and “being” dead, between the material and the ideal. In *Death Sentences*, Garrett Stewart addresses the impossibility of representing the nothingness that follows death. “Mimesis may itself seem inoperable,” he claims, “[death] being all presentiment, never direct presentation” (55). If Spanish Realism features a “primary engagement with the things of this world” (Turner, “Realist” 81), death constitutes a representational impasse as it is the precise limitation and disintegration of materiality. Traces of death materialize in *Fortunata y Jacinta* in silent flashes of funeral processions that wind through the cityscape, like the one Fortunata watches from the Portillo de Gilimón, “[un] largo rosario de coches como culebra que avanzaba ondeando” (885). These “things”—funeral coaches and coffins—characterize the aftermath of death, while the moment of death, unknowable and ever-elusive, shrinks from the page.

And still, the nothingness of death lingers in this novel like “una telaraña, como una red que envolviera todas esas vidas, toda la vida” (Casalduero 92). For Noël Valis, in a Realist representation, the external and knowable extend outward from invisible bedrock, an underlying essence that, for all its intangibility, is conveyed palpably in the narration (256).

Unlike the distant, ritual vestiges of death, its approach hangs heavy in the narration like “rich psychological sediment” (Valis 258). Stewart claims that the only narratable experience of death is the anticipation that precedes it, a pre-feeling that stands in for death before it manifests and necessarily escapes narration. Unlike Aurora’s second-hand, can’t-put-my-finger-on-it tale of the discovery of a dead Moreno-Isla, the anticipation of his death is marked by representations firmly rooted in the body, undeniably *real*, that emulate the dynamic emotions of foreboding, fear and anxiety that prefigure it. Death in *Fortunata y Jacinta* is indeed “all presentiment,” whereas its climax remains an unrelatable narrative event.

Stewart reminds us that as an empty interval in the narration, death provides meaning insofar as it bestows a sense of survival or rebirth upon the remaining characters (69). Death undoubtedly sends ripples throughout the overlapping social circles in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. The death of Fortunata is clearly pivotal in that the resolution of the plot hinges precisely upon the fact that she dies: the adoption of Juan Evaristo ensures that there is a secure heir to the Santa Cruz family, and Jacinta has the child she has longed for. Fortunata’s death allows her to establish her own social position, proclaiming herself an angel in the final moments of her life (Cruz Martes 144). Likewise, Mauricia’s character serves as “un marco para la unión de Fortunata y Jacinta” (Quispe-Agnoli 354). As Fortunata holds vigil at her deathbed, Jacinta appears with Adoración, Mauricia’s daughter, so that she may bid farewell to her mother. Furthermore, the presence of the deceased persists in the narration. Once Moreno-Isla dies, his presence lingers in the text; it is after his death that Fortunata becomes convinced of Jacinta’s loyalty to Santa Cruz, and later, Jacinta dreams of the life she could have had with the deceased (Sobejano 222-23). Likewise, when Fortunata eerily confuses Guillermina with the deceased Mauricia,¹ the reader is reminded that the dead continue to form part of the novel’s reality. While various deaths figure prominently in resolving the novel’s plotting, death itself is not depicted as especially momentous. Despite her fundamental role in arranging the meeting of the novel’s protagonists, Mauricia’s memory dissipates shortly after her body is taken away to the cemetery: “Pronto desapareció el carro, y de Mauricia no quedó más que un recuerdo, todavía fresco, pero que se había de secar rápidamente” (856). Feijoo’s unnarrated death is only acknowledged as Maxi and Ballester leave the same cemetery after visiting Fortunata’s grave in the final pages of the novel: “Cuando salían del cementerio, entraba un entierro con bastante acompañamiento. Era el de don Evaristo Feijoo. Pero los dos farmacéuticos no fijaron su atención en él” (1178). Indeed, “[A los personajes] les llega el final de la vida dentro de la novela y queda anotado, nada más” (Casalduero 91). After Fortunata’s funeral, Ballester ponders the image of Fortunata that he holds fresh in his mind: “vivirá en mí algún tiempo; pero se irá borrando, borrando, hasta que enteramente desaparezca” (1174). Like the “trabajo digestivo del espíritu” to which Ballester attributes the fading memories of the dead, the death of Manuel Moreno-Isla is unimportant, being that “[p]or aquí y por allá caían en el mismo instante hojas y más hojas inútiles, pero la mañana próxima había de alumbrar innumerables pimpollos frescos y nuevos” (994). Contrasted with this image of the enormous, regenerating tree of society, death and its aftermath are quite ordinary.

What is emphasized with great detail is the anticipation of death. The reader observes that in *Fortunata y Jacinta* the climactic, unnarratable event of death is de-emphasized and a

pervasive representation of anticipation comes to characterize its death scenes. In particular, this notion of foreboding is facilitated by the represented sensations of ascension, frustrated movement and rhythms, particularly in the scenes that precede the deaths of Moreno-Isla and Mauricia la Dura. In her examination of narrative focus in the death of Moreno-Isla, Turner interprets the “kinesthetic images” associated with death as products of narrative shift—a dynamic distancing of intimacy—that ultimately serves to heighten the impact of his death (“Strategies” 72-73). I envision this portrayed movement as the felt pre-experience of death, the palpable approach of what cannot be felt. This depiction provides insight into how movement is utilized to presage impending death and to underscore the impossibility of representing the climax of death.

On a visit to Madrid from London, the adopted home that he longs to return to, it seems that Moreno-Isla enters the plot only to leave it. As his existence is marked by unproductive movement—frustrated restlessness and repetitive, painstaking upward movement—we may not be convinced that Moreno-Isla will make it back, especially considering his nagging heart condition. The depiction of repetitive climbing, labored walking and bubbling interiority threaten his weak heart, but also indicate that movement constitutes a significant bearer of meaning in the novel’s representation of what cannot be seen.

The lack of resolution associated with the presence of Moreno-Isla embodies the anticipation of death, a prolonged escalation of anxieties that, even in the scene of his narrated death, fail to reach a climax. Geoffrey Ribbans envisions Moreno-Isla’s restlessness as a consequence of unrequited love: “His hopeless love for Jacinta causes the emotional turbulence which is at the root of his illness” (110). Sobejano also interprets Moreno-Isla’s character as one who survives on hope, and he imagines death sweeping over Moreno-Isla like a much needed wave of sleep, quelling his fidgety insomnia: “Es la invasión del sueño de la muerte atajando la evasión del insomnio de la esperanza” (235). Moreno-Isla’s failed courtship of Jacinta does correspond with his sudden death, as if his energies expire with his hope. Yet beyond that, the language that colors these scenes alludes to the challenges of representing death in literature; the death of Moreno-Isla speaks to the larger question of how the Realist novelist portrays the real but intangible, the most certain unknown in a fictional world of things.

For Stewart, in view of the inadequacy of language in a representation of death, “prose may shiver into ambivalent divisions where it can neither define nor with conviction divine” (56). The physically-rooted language that characterizes the scenes that anticipate Moreno-Isla’s death seems to fill in the gap of knowledge surrounding death that Stewart laments. The notions of ascension, rhythm and climax bear what Eugene Gendlin refers to as “felt meaning”—a facet of language that adduces the experience of the body. Where linguistic signs falter, one is acutely aware of felt meaning as it “constitutes our experienced sense of meaningfulness” (Gendlin 71). This theory facilitates an understanding of the ways in which implicit meaning informs the narratability of the death experience. Mark Johnson elaborates on Gendlin’s suggestion that the body implies and carries our situations forward, noting that implicit meaning is rooted in the corporeal. For Johnson, meaning “arises from our feeling of qualities, sensory patterns, movement, changes, and emotional contours” (70). Both

Gendlin and Johnson propose that meaning derives from these markers of experience that are dissociated from language. Such a theory provides a new means of illustrating an unrelatable experience like death. Through represented movement and pattern, Galdós portrays death as an absent climax, and in this way, the representation echoes the inadequacy of language with a physically-rooted dynamic that evaporates at its critical moment. By channeling the implicit meaning of the body, Realism can “[grasp] the real by seeing it as something more than simply ‘real’” (Valis 256).

The language with which death is characterized in *Fortunata y Jacinta* certainly speaks to bodily experience, often through the trope of breaking loose from a greater organism, like a leaf from a tree. Just as Moreno-Isla “se desprendió de la humanidad,” Maxi relishes the thought of dying and freeing himself from a world of suffering: “¡Morir, acabar de penar, desprenderse de todas estas miserias, de tantos dolores y de toda la inmundicia terrenal!” Fortunata echoes the same sentiment and wishes to dislodge herself from the social fabric: “desprenderse de las lacerias de este mundo” (1012). Notably, the hemorrhage that causes her death is described in a similar fashion; she observes that “se le desprendía algo en su interior” (1155). The repeated trope of dying as “coming loose” emphasizes the ways in which the social contours of the novel are influenced and social relationships reworked when a death occurs in the novel. Furthermore, the metaphor of death as a “desprendimiento” illustrates a representation of death as a *feeling*, not an emotion but a sensation of the body.

Like many of the secondary characters in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Moreno-Isla, the nephew of Guillermina, is significant in that he relates to or in some way affects Fortunata and/or Jacinta. Yet, he is an unusual secondary character; his portrayed interiority elevates him to one with a more significant role (Sobejano 223). To be sure, the reader gains access to Moreno-Isla’s thoughts as he walks the streets of Madrid, when he bemoans “estos endiablados pisos, en este repecho insoportable” (958). We bear witness to the bouts of insomnia in which he rehashes earlier disturbing events, such as a regretful encounter with a leprotic beggar (973), and contemplates the minutiae of his surroundings. A painting of St. Joseph, for example, retrieves a memory from his childhood in which he impulsively mounted a donkey that sped off through the city; it was unstoppable: “no fue que el burro se parara, sino que el jinete se cayó” (976). Like this uncontrolled, frustrated ride and his painstaking walk through Madrid, Moreno-Isla’s presence is repeatedly characterized by movement and faltering.

It follows that his tenure in the novel is framed by a set of stairs. Moreno-Isla is first mentioned when Juanito meets Fortunata in mid-ascent to the seventh-floor apartment of Plácido Estupiñá, friend and former employee of the Santa Cruz family. The building forms part of the western side of the Plaza Mayor and has a tremendous staircase, given that the entrance on la Cava de San Miguel sits at a lower level than the Plaza. The narrator explains: “No existen en Madrid alturas mayores, y para vencer aquéllas era forzoso apechugar con ciento veinte escalones,” unless one entered through the shoe store, or the poultry shop, on the Plaza (67). Juanito and the reader learn that this building is the property of Moreno-Isla and that he intends to charge Estupiñá with its administration the following year (72). Not only is Moreno-Isla associated with the fatiguing staircase, but his failure to continue managing the building alludes to a future absence, limiting his narrative presence from the very moment the

novel’s plot is conceived.

Indeed, his death is imminent. Moreno-Isla suffers from what his doctor and cousin Moreno Rubio describes as “desórdenes en la circulación” (962), a condition that frequently renders him out of breath with a racing heartbeat. He himself views the condition not as a malady but an “impaciencia... hormiguilla...” connected to his unrequited love for Jacinta² (972). Even so, his presence in the novel is characterized by other markers of frustrated forward movement. When he first appears in the novel, a lively, playful back-and-forth with Guillermina is suddenly cut off by the announcement of the abdication of Amadeo: “No siguió este diálogo, que prometía dar mucho juego” (158). This disrupted exchange will echo throughout Moreno-Isla’s promising, yet brief presence in the novel. His crescendo towards death is already in motion when he arrives at the home of Barbarita, literally entering the reader’s view mid-ascent on another staircase: “Subía despacio y jadeante, a causa de la afeción al corazón que padecía” (681). His labored ascent is punctuated both with exclamations of relief and breathlessness: “¡Oh, puerta del Paraíso! ¡Qué manos te abren!... Dispense usted... Me canso horriblemente” (681). At the sight of his secret love Jacinta,³ Moreno-Isla makes a hyperbolic reference to Heaven, a metaphor signifying that the upward movement represents a journey towards death. In these brief scenes, one notices the dynamic swells and deflations that frame the trajectory of Moreno-Isla’s character in the novel.

This rise and fall continues to permeate Moreno-Isla’s existence, such as his constant references to an imminent return to England. Moreno-Isla comments “no veo la hora de volverme a marchar” the longer he stays in Spain (685). This sense of anticipation corresponds with Sobejano’s evaluation of hope as being the central quality of Moreno-Isla’s character. In his analysis of Moreno-Isla’s solitary death, Sobejano ultimately claims that hope—particularly his hope for Jacinta’s love—is portrayed as a constant battle with death: “La esperanza del hombre dura tanto como el latido de su corazón” (236). Although his character is constantly looking forward in expectation of the future, the notion of “future” is innately confused by the simultaneous sense of “return”: he is, after all, looking “forward” to retracing his steps back to England. Yet the forward advances he craves are inhibited by the weakness of his flesh. The circulation of his blood echoes throughout the narration, a reminder of both the desires of his heart and its precarious condition. When his companions notice he feels ill, he claims: “No es nada. Nervios, quizá. Lo que más me molesta es el ruido de la circulación de la sangre. Por eso me gusta tanto viajar... Con el ruido del tren no oigo el mío” (685). Here the feeling of constant interior motion is contrasted with a journey, as if the forward motion of the train could blot out and override the unproductive commotion in his veins.

Moreno-Isla conceives of his heart as “un fuelle roto” (960) and as a result, climbing proves to be his most distressing challenge. He struggles back to his apartment from the Retiro: “Muy mal debe andar la máquina cuando a mitad de la calle de Alcalá ya estoy rendido,” he thinks as he navigates the slight incline, “Ésta es la capital de las setecientas colinas” (958-9). Later, he says of the hill: “Gracias a Dios que he subido el repecho. Parece la subida al Calvario, y con esta cruz que llevo auestas” (959). He concludes that “es cosa de tomar un coche” but convinces himself to journey on, just as he notices a burial procession in the Puerta del Sol. “No, lo que es aquí no me he de morir yo,” he grumbles to himself, “para que no me

lleven en esas horribles carrozas” (959). Not all the sights connote such an omen, yet they call attention to interrupted movement. His struggle down Alcalá is peppered with half dialogues that simulate the interactions that he has along the way, and they symbolize both the progress and stoppages of his journey. He notices Barbarita on a balcony and hides his fatigue:

“Adiós, adiós... Vengo de dar mi paseito... Estoy muy bien, hoy no me he cansado nada...”
 ¡Qué mentira tan grande he dicho! Me canso como nunca. Ahora, escalera de mi casa, sé benévola conmigo. Subamos... ¡Ay, qué corazón maldito fuele! Despacito, tiempo hay de llegar arriba. Si no llego hoy, llegaré mañana. Seis escalones a la espalda. ¡Dios mío, lo que falta todavía! (960)

As his interior monologue demonstrates, the small advances up the stairs are nearly insurmountable, yet his arrival on the main floor is not portrayed as a grand achievement; the narrator simply states: “Cuando llegó al principal, su hermana le esperaba en la puerta” (960). Curiously, the feeling associated with the ascent surpasses the ascent itself: “La fatiga del paseo y de la escalera le duraba aún” (961). Even at what is portrayed as a physical climax, what prevails is the feeling associated with the climb, rather than the satisfaction connoted by the destination itself.

In this second scene in which the reader witnesses his painstaking ascent to the top of a staircase, the “climax” constitutes a second metaphor for death. While Jacinta represented Heaven, Moreno Rubio awaits him with a physical examination, a confirmation of his fatal condition. With a foreboding analogy, Moreno-Isla tells him that he will stretch out like a cadaver on a dissecting table (961). As the doctor listens to his chest, tension begins to mount again when he tells him that he hears something wrong; Rubio provides cryptic responses to Moreno-Isla’s worried questions and stalls the final prognosis. With incongruous levity, Rubio offers that he suffers from lovesickness, and suggests that his circulation disorder requires “una tranquilidad absoluta” (962).

Impossibly restless, later that night Moreno-Isla lies awake, disturbed by his insomnia. In long paragraphs marked by stream of consciousness, he debates his return to England, his frustrated relations with Jacinta, and his desire to have a child with her. Suddenly at the height of his frustration, his heart stops the flow of anxious thoughts with remarkable weight: “La palpitación que sentía era tan fuerte que tuvo que sentarse. Se ahogaba. En la región cardiaca, o cerca de ella, más al centro, sentía el golpe de la sangre con duro y contundente compás. Era como si un herrero martillase junto al mismo corazón, remachando a fuego una pieza nueva que se acababa de echar” (972).

The throbbing rhythm of his body is a jolting reminder of mortality, and his observations recall images of speed, repetitive sound and movement. As he contemplates his surroundings, he sees “un lebrél que corre tras la caza” in a pile of papers, and hears the constant sound of running water from the fountain outside (974). Focused on the sound of coaches in the street, he remembers his coach in London “[que] corría como una exhalación” (974). This image of rushing air forcefully ushers in a decision to return to England: “Me ha entrado de repente y con un empuje... No veo la hora de que amanezca para mandarle a Tom que haga el equipaje” (974).

After a restless morning in church with Guillermina, perturbed as he walks aimlessly around the church during mass (980), Moreno-Isla now finds the ascent to his apartment strangely easy, “la palpitación adormecida” (983). The heart-pounding anticipation has dissipated, as if the finality of his decision to depart had finally extinguished his unproductive restlessness and eased the laborious climb, and he instructs Tom that they will leave the following day. The representation of this final decision to leave Madrid was originally followed by a different scene in the galley proofs (Willem). In it, Moreno-Isla has an internal debate over whether or not he should say goodbye to the Santa Cruz family before leaving for England. When he opts to visit them, we remarkably find an additional battle with a staircase; his ascent to the Santa Cruz home is as follows:

Al subir la escalera de la casa, se cansaba otra vez horriblemente. Su mejoría era puramente ilusoria. “Es que en ninguna escalera me canso como en la de esta maldita casa... Siempre que la subo, parece que voy á echar el último aliento... Ya estoy arriba. Gracias á Dios”. (qtd. in Willem 179)

Willem suggests that by ultimately condensing the idea into one line, in which Moreno-Isla decides he has time for goodbyes the next day, Galdós retains the irony while avoiding repetition (180). Yet, this additional reference to an arduous climb further indicates the mindful depiction of this character and the tension between his upward movement and his physical condition. The stairs are not eliminated entirely, because in the final version, Moreno-Isla meets Jacinta by chance after purchasing some Spanish mementos, and they ascend the stairs to his apartment together. After they reach the door, he asks her if she would like to go back down again “para volver a subir” (987). By wishing to extend his time with her, Moreno-Isla prolongs the anticipation of a climax— that of his long-awaited exit, of discovering if Jacinta will express regret at his departure, and of his death—through upward movement that ultimately achieves no goal but to postpone the inevitable.

Moreno-Isla’s final attack literally stops him in such a trajectory. That night, as he contemplates his return to Spain the following April, Moreno-Isla rises from the table “y después de dar dos o tres paseos, volvió a sentarse junto a la mesa donde estaba la luz porque había sentido una opresión molestísima. Las pulsaciones, que un instante cesaron, volvieron con fuerza abrumadora, acompañadas de un sentimiento de plenitud torácica” (993). The language with which this fatal attack is described is imbued with imagery of movement—tightening, expansion, an overwhelming rush of beating after a brief respite—all of which provide meaning about what it may feel like to die. One notes the pervasive uses of metaphorical references to rising in the illuminating description of his final moments:

Tuvo que ponerse rígido porque desde el centro del cuerpo *le subía* por el pecho un bulto inmenso, *una ola*, algo que le cortaba la respiración. Alargó el brazo como quien acompaña del gesto un vocablo, pero el vocablo, expresión de angustia tal vez o demanda de socorro, no pudo salir de sus labios. *La onda crecía*; la sintió pasar por la garganta y *subir, subir siempre*. Dejó de ver la luz. (emphasis added 993)

Here, dying is represented with images that connote unresolved feeling, of a rising wave that never crashes.⁴ This sensation of unending rising embodies the approach of death, the epitome of anticipation. As Moreno-Isla traverses the gap between life and death, his consciousness recedes and is replaced by a third-person narrator, a shift that simulates how death overcomes him (Turner, “Strategies” 73). The narrator describes the final moments of his life from a distance: “Puso ambas manos sobre el borde de la mesa, e inclinando la cabeza, apoyó la frente en ellas exhalando un sordo gemido. Dejóse estar así, inmóvil, mudo. Y en aquella actitud de recogimiento y tristeza expiró aquel infeliz” (993-94). The narrator reveals the cause of Moreno-Isla’s death: “La vida cesó en él a consecuencia del estallido y desbordamiento vascular, produciéndole conmoción instantánea, tan pronto iniciada como extinguida” (994). Finally, the sense of restlessness and ascent has reached its climax in what is fittingly described as a burst.

It is important to note that a lack of resolution is imbued in the text even after Moreno-Isla dies. As Aurora explains to Fortunata the following day, his body was found seated, leaning over the table, with its eyes open. Instead of laying him onto the floor or a bed, “Le habían incorporado en el asiento” (1003). Curiously, when Moreno-Isla had met with the doctor, he was very anxious to lie down so that Moreno Rubio could examine him more efficiently. That way, he comments, “me tienes como un muerto, con las manos cruzadas” (961). Moreno-Isla never achieves the peaceful repose of the dead, and instead is seated at a chair, covered in blood with a gaping mouth. Furthermore, unlike the other characters that die in the novel (Arnaiz el Gordo, Mauricia la Dura, Fortunata and Feijoo), Moreno-Isla’s funeral procession is not narrated. Even the burial of the true *Pituso*, whose death occurs off-stage, is recounted when Juanito reveals his existence to Jacinta: “miré desaparecer por la calle de la Montera abajo el carro con la cajita azul” (298). For all the anticipation that accompanied this death, the achievement of that climax does not break the tension of the rising wave, Moreno-Isla’s last conscious appraisal of physical experience. This swell of anticipation cannot crash at the pivotal moment of death, as it is a moment unknowable to the mind. By utilizing the physically-bound representation of movement to signal the approach of death, Galdós engages the reader’s awareness of body to simulate the experience of dying.

Moreno-Isla’s presence in the novel seems to sizzle with a sense of restlessness and forward movement that builds to the eventual climax, to the literal “burst” and dissipation of the character’s being. The pervasive sense of mounting climax is also featured in the protracted death scene of Mauricia la Dura, particularly in the anticipation of her final Communion, an event whose every detail is orchestrated by Guillermina. Mauricia’s dying, death and funeral procession serve as the backdrop for perhaps the novel’s most significant events that propel the rest of the novel. Quispe-Agnoli observes the theatrical suspense with which Mauricia’s death is depicted: “El gradualismo que demuestra el narrador en su manejo de los preparativos también anuncia el ambiente de una posible culminación narrativa. Finalmente el espectáculo se presenta de manera semejante al suspenso teatral” (351). Curiously, like the case of Moreno-Isla, this is a spectacle of preparation, not of death itself.

The preparations for Mauricia’s death connote anticipation in a way that mirrors the

constant references to Moreno-Isla’s failing heart. While Moreno-Isla battles with endless inclines and staircases, one notes that the characterization of Mauricia is informed by rhythm and the notion of a cycle of anticipatory events that build towards a climax. When Fortunata first encounters Mauricia at the Micaelas convent, the reader learns of her periodic outbursts. Like the preparations for her death, Mauricia’s tantrums are also referred to as performances: “Era un espectáculo imponente y aun divertido el que de tiempo en tiempo, comúnmente cada quince o veinte días, daba Mauricia a todo el personal del convento” (501). As the narrator indicates, not only does Mauricia “perform” an emotional outburst with regularity, but this cycle of outbursts has specific stages of crescendo. “Iniciábasele aquel trastorno a Mauricia como se inician las enfermedades, con síntomas leves, pero infalibles, los cuales se van acentuando y recorren después todo el proceso morboso” (502). This moment before an illness (“el período prodrómico”) is characterized by warning signs that become increasingly prominent and more foreboding, signaling a future problem. Once the nuns have intervened in her confrontation with the other sisters, “Mauricia callaba al fin quedándose durante dos o tres horas taciturna, rebelde al trabajo, haciéndolo todo al revés de cómo se le mandaba [...] A este período seguía por lo común una travesura ruidosa y carnavalesca” (502). These playful pranks escalate into an explosion of anger when the Mother Superior announces that Mauricia will be locked in a cell for insubordination: “Aquí fue el estallar la fiereza de aquella maldita mujer” (502). This reference to explosion recalls the description of Moreno-Isla’s heart attack, and reflects the sense of climax that has been building. Later, the narrator enumerates the details of Mauricia’s behavior:

Después de cumplir una condena, lo que ocurría infaliblemente *una vez cada treinta o cuarenta días*, la mujer napoleónica estaba cohibida y como avergonzada entre sus compañeras, poniendo toda su atención en la obligaciones, demostrando un celo y obediencia que encantaban a las madres. *Durante cuatro o cinco días* desempeñaba sin embarazo ni fatiga la tarea de tres mujeres. *Pasadas dos semanas*, advertían que *se iba cansando*; ya no había en su trabajo aquella corrección y diligencia admirables; empezaban las omisiones, los olvidos, los descuidillos, y todo esto *iba en aumento* hasta que la repetición de las faltas anunciaba *la proximidad* de otro estallido. (emphasis added 509)

In this description of Mauricia’s cyclical outbursts, one notes that otherwise erratic and unpredictable behavior yields to the notion of regularity, of consistent stages of crescendo, climax and decrescendo.

When Mauricia’s health begins to decline, her physical symptoms do not retain a cyclical quality, but rather display a mounting climax that will not reach its breaking point: “de rato en rato le daban como ataques de asfixia, siendo su respiración muy difícil y quejándose de irresistible calor [...] estuvo la Dura un ratito como quien desea romper a toser y no puede” (791). An unrelenting tension continues to build in the scene that precedes Mauricia’s communion. As the moment Mauricia dies cannot be directly depicted, the representation shifts to the Viaticum—a representable, narratable event that precedes her death. Like the ascension that characterizes the death of Moreno-Isla, the sense of foreboding in this case is marked by a

sense of rhythm and frustrated climax.

Near death, at the home of Severiana, Maurica awaits the arrival of her final communion on the second floor. It is important to note that the term “Viaticum” is closely related to the sense of movement—not only is it given to those that are approaching death, but it refers to the provisions necessary for a journey.⁵ Severiana relishes in the details of the upcoming arrival of the host: “Mañana tenemos aquí gran fiesta... ¿Te parece? Viene a visitarte el que hizo los Cielos y la Tierra” (792). Nonetheless, these preparations, like Moreno-Isla’s ascent up the stairs, are stalled and interrupted, moments that serve to increase the anticipation of the arrival. For example, Guillermina scolds the neighborhood boys for cluttering the entryway and the stairs that lead to Mauricia’s room (798). The arrival of Father Nones interrupts her admonition: “A la cárcel van atados codo con codo si no se portan hoy como es debido, hoy que viene a honrar esta casa el...” (799). In this conversation with Father Nones, Guillermina explains her attention to cleanliness and is interrupted by a guitarist playing nearby: “Claro que no importa; pero ¿por qué no hemos de tener limpieza y decoro delante del Señor, siquiera por estimación de nosotros mismos? Se limpia la casa cuando viene el teniente alcalde y el médico del Ayuntamiento con sus bastones de borlas, y se ha de dejar sucia cuando viene el... Pero ¡cállese usted, hombre, por amor de Dios!” (799). The lack of completion of Guillermina’s thought and the precise lack of climax—of revealing who will arrive—reflects the sense of anticipation that colors the scene, and underscores the absence of climax; indeed the unfinished “el...” leaves both interlocutor and reader in want of a resolution.

Furthermore, the interruptions of music are pitted against the regulating rhythm associated with the Viaticum. The arrival of the Viaticum procession and Mauricia’s communion are referenced in the text with regularity. Both Chapters 6.2 and 6.3 begin in anticipation of the event; the first reference marks a specific time frame: “Dos horas antes de la señalada para que Mauricia recibiera a Dios” (796), and the second, the mounting anticipation: “Se acercaba la hora, y en el patio sonaba el rumor de emoción teatral que acompaña a las grandes solemnidades” (803). The excited sounds of the crowd that signal the heightening of anticipation diminish the actual arrival of the priest. The manner in which the procession is described is of utmost importance; the increasing anticipation is marked by a pace—both in sound and distance—that is perceived by those waiting with Mauricia:

Llegó el momento hermoso y solemne. Oíase desde arriba el rumor popular, y luego, en el seno de aquel silencio, que cayó súbitamente sobre la casa como una nube, la campanilla vibrante marcó el paso de la comitiva del Sacramento [...] El *tilin* sonaba cada vez más cerca; se le sentía subir la escalera entre un traqueteo de pasos; después llegaba a la puerta; vibraba más fuerte en el pasillo entre el muge-muge de los latines que venía murmurando el acólito. (804)

The sound of the tolling bell embodies the foreboding of death; each toll implicitly insinuates the following toll that will continue the pace. Significantly, the mounting anticipation is realized through an intangible, yet intense presence; the narrator focuses on the sounds of the atmosphere, rather than the sight of the approaching procession itself. The actual anticipated moment—Mauricia’s communion—is itself omitted from the narration. Just as the bell had

signaled the arrival of the procession, the narrator describes its departure and cohesive descent down the stairs: “Poco después salió la comitiva, precedida de la campanilla, entre la calle formada por mujeres arrodilladas, con velas o sin ellas. Se sintió que bajaba, que salía y se alejaba por la calle” (805). The crescendo and decrescendo of sound that demarcate Mauricia’s communion de-emphasize the experience of climax itself; as in the death of Moreno-Isla, the sense of building intensity is the way in which the reader gathers meaning about imminent death.

After all, Mauricia’s communion is *in itself* a building block, another stage in the intensity that precedes her death. Her state worsens as her symptoms of paralysis become increasingly grave: “La parálisis agitante crecía de una manera aterradora” (823). To intensify the crescendo of her agony, a peculiar sound accompanies Mauricia’s escalating condition. “¿Oyen ustedes ese trombón que toca la marcha real?” Guillermina asks, “En efecto, se oía bien clara, aunque lejana, la marcha real, tocada con verdadero frenesí por Leopardi, que en la repetición le ponía un lujo escandaloso de mordentes y apoyaturas” (823). The sound of Leopardi’s trombone enhances the representation of Mauricia’s agony in that its depiction of intensity and chaos embodies an aural climax. Although he plays a royal march, he includes frenetic trills and embellishments that intensify the repeated verse. Furthermore, these improvisations also insinuate a brief disturbance of time and pace that eventually resolves into harmony. The trill typifies repetition, a building of note upon note that implies a resolution. At the same time, the *appoggiatura* implies the infringement of one note upon another: it is an ornamental note that precedes another, temporarily displacing part of the second note’s duration until it resolves into that note. These aspects of the distant music that accompanies the agony illustrate a movement towards resolution, an analogy of Mauricia’s movement towards death.

For all its programmed pomp and pageantry, Mauricia’s long-awaited death passes through the narration entirely unmentioned: “Guillermina y Severiana le acercaron un espejo a la cara y lo tuvieron un ratito... Después todos empezaron a hablar en alta voz. Ya estaba Mauricia en el otro mundo” (845). The ellipsis substitutes a narrated explanation of her passing; in this way, “narrative becomes the very vessel of death as an understood event” (Stewart 74). In fact, the ellipsis is an implied sign that substitutes the lack of breath on the mirror, and further removes the realization that death has occurred from the narration. Beyond that, the ellipsis embodies the interval that Stewart takes as the temporal representation of death. It is the hiccup of time, the glossed-over moment between the moment of death and consciousness of the fact. The narrator does not tell us that Mauricia has died, but that she had *already* passed into the other world. The rhythmic, ever-increasing events that led to this death scene seem to evaporate into nothingness as her much anticipated passing is omitted from the narration.

The trajectories that led to death for both Mauricia la Dura and Moreno-Isla are characterized by feelings rooted in the physical: waves, rising, ascension, tolling and rhythm. Such representations therefore depict the unknowable experience of death with physically-rooted meanings. Death in this novel is rarely portrayed directly, but comes to the reader through a second-hand narration, as in the death of Mauricia la Dura which is witnessed by Doña Lupe and recounted to Fortunata. Even the details surrounding Moreno-Isla’s funeral

are virtual hearsay: “—Hoy ha sido el funeral,” recounts Aurora, “¡Cosa estupenda, según me ha dicho Candelaria! El catafalco llegaba hasta el techo y la orquesta era magnífica” (1002). The first-hand narration of death, as “told” from the perspective of Moreno-Isla, is marked by the sensation of ascension that never reaches its climax. The final presence of his body in the narration seems to resolve that infinite rising with the materiality of death: if in dying his spirit rises limitlessly, Moreno-Isla’s corpse reaches its physical peak at the ceiling of the church. Like the intricately wrought cenotaph of *La de Bringas*, the scaffolding beneath the casket of Moreno-Isla calls attention to the hyperbole of Aurora’s statement and the inherent “above and beyond” that substitutes an impossible mimetic representation of death.

In this image of Moreno-Isla’s body, hyperbole itself stands in for unnarratable transcendence of the material in that hyperbole itself connotes a sense of infinite movement. From the Greek *hyperballein* “to throw over and beyond,” hyperbole connotes a limitless trajectory that reaches no peak. Therefore, the hyperbolic description of Moreno-Isla’s elevated body demonstrates our limited resources for concretely representing the unknowable: like his corpse, representation is limited precisely because we cannot depict mimetically what remains a mystery. While the excessive rhetoric associated with hyperbole would seem to preclude the achievement of mimetic representation, its inherent sense of infinity implies the transcendence that is otherwise unrepresentable. The exaggerated description and extravagance of Moreno-Isla’s funeral certainly reminds us of his ironic abhorrence of a *cursi* funeral procession. Yet, if we consider the implicit sense of heightening associated with hyperbolic rhetoric, we find not meaning in excess, but a glimpse of an “untranslatable” moment that lies just below the representable surface.

The primacy of materiality in *Fortunata y Jacinta* figures prominently in its intimately depicted death scenes. In fact, the inherent vulnerability of the body is precisely what destroys each of the three characters whose deaths we witness. Mauricia has poisoned her body with alcohol, while Moreno-Isla’s fatal flaw is his weak heart. The birth of Juan Evaristo causes an internal rupture and hemorrhage in Fortunata, and her body surpasses its own boundaries through profuse bleeding. Like the overstuffed Torquemada, each of these characters experiences a death from within that destroys the fragile flesh of their bodies. Yet this materiality is flecked with atemporal qualities. In the case of Moreno-Isla, the delicate nature of materiality is rendered tragic because of the empathy forged by our direct access to his perspective; Turner qualifies his life an abortion, “so rich in potential, so desiccated and useless in the end” (“Strategies” 71). What drives that moral connection is the intimate representation of a fictional body, crumbling in our mind’s eye, and the sweeping forces that usher it towards death. The images that connote anticipation—climbing, forward and backward movement, rhythmic repetition and the disturbances that affect it—are ultimately meaningful to the implied reader because such feelings begin in the body. The pervasive sense of irresolution, caused by allusions to forward movements that never reach culmination, illustrates the impossibility of capturing the moment of death in representation. Death is an ever-approximated narrative event that connotes an infinite advance. The inherent presence of continuity—the bells that implicitly herald the following tolls, the incessant climb up the staircase—serves to foreground a climax that itself never materializes.

NOTES

¹ At the vigil, Fortunata is taken aback: “Fortunata tuvo un estremecimiento nervioso, creyendo al pronto que era la propia Mauricia que aparecía. . . Pero no, era Guillermina” (848).

² As he contemplates his condition, Moreno-Isla notes “Si me quisiera, el corazón se me curaría” (972).

³ Moreno-Isla’s frustrated pursuit of Jacinta is also described in terms of movement. He remarks to himself: “Las pocas veces que la cojo sola, no adelanto nada” (965).

⁴ Gilman notes that water imagery is frequently employed in the works of Galdós to express one’s sense of the experience of time (242).

⁵ The word “Viaticum” derives from the Latin *viaticus*, or belonging to a journey, and *viare*, to travel.

WORKS CITED

- Casaldüero, Joaquín. *Vida y obra de Galdós*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1974. Print.
- Cruz Martes, Camille. "El espacio ambiguo de la muerte en *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Pórtico: Revista de Estudios Hispánicos del Recinto Universitario de Mayaguez* 1 (2006): 141-73. Print.
- Gendlin, Eugene. *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1997. Print.
- Gilman, Stephen. *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel, 1867-1887*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1981. Print.
- Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.
- Pérez Galdós, Benito. *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2002. Print.
- Quispe-Agnoli, Rocío. "De la mujer caída al ángel subvertido en *Fortunata y Jacinta*: Las funciones ambivalentes de Mauricia la Dura." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 75.3 (1998): 337-54. *InformaWorld*. 28 June 2010. Web. 16 Nov. 2011.
- Ribbans, Geoffrey. *Pérez Galdós: Fortunata y Jacinta*. London: Grant & Cutler, 1977. Critical Guides to Spanish Texts. Print.
- Sobejano, Gonzalo. "Muerte del solitario (Benito Pérez Galdós: *Fortunata y Jacinta*, 4, II, 6)." *El comentario de textos, 3: La novela realista*. Ed. Andrés Amorós. Madrid: Castalia, 1979. 203-54. Print.
- Stewart, Garrett. *Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984. Print.
- Turner, Harriet S. "The Realist Novel." *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel from 1600 to the Present*. Ed. Harriet S. Turner and Adelaida López y Martínez. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 81-101. Print.
- . "Strategies in Narrative Point of View: On Meaning and Morality in the Galdós Novel." Ed. Benito Brancaforte, Edward R. Mulvihill, and Roberto G. Sánchez. *Homenaje a Antonio Sánchez Barbudo: Ensayos de literatura española moderna*. Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1981. 61-77. Print.
- Valis, Noël. "On the Matter of Inner Realism: Clarín's *La Regenta* and Galdós' *Fortunata y Jacinta*." Ed. J.A. Garrido Ardila. *A History of the Spanish Novel*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. 255-74. Print.

Willem, Linda M. “Moreno-Isla’s
Unpublished Scene from the
Fortunata y Jacinta Galleys.”
Anales Galdosianos 27-28 (1992-
1993): 179-83. *Biblioteca Virtual
Miguel de Cervantes*. Web. 22 Nov.
2011.